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# AFTERWHILES

BY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

*SEVENTEENTH THOUSAND*

**Indianapolis**

BOWEN-MERRILL CO., PUBLISHERS

1892

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## AFTERWHILES



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AFTERWHILES

**By the Same Author.**

NEIGHBORLY POEMS ON FRIENDSHIP, GRIEF AND  
FARM-LIFE—Including "The Old Swimmin'  
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IN ENGLAND:

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Various.

**LONGMANS, GREEN & CO., LONDON.**

# TO HUMBOLDT RILEY

*I can not say, and I will not say  
That he is dead.—He is just away.*





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NOTE.—Acknowledgments are due the courtesy of the CENTURY MAGAZINE for reprint here of the poems "*When She Comes Home,*" and "*Nothin' to Say.*"

*W*HERE are they — the Afterwhiles —  
Luring us the lengthening miles  
Of our lives? Where is the dawn  
With the dew across the lawn  
Stroked with eager feet the far  
Way the hills and valleys are?  
Where the sun that smites the frown  
Of the eastward-gazer down?  
Where the rifted wreathes of mist  
O'er us, tinged with amethyst,  
Round the mountain's steep defiles?  
Where are all the afterwhiles?

*Afterwhile — and we will go  
Thither, yon, and to and fro —  
From the stifling city-streets  
To the country's cool retreats —  
From the riot to the rest  
Where hearts beat the placidest;  
Afterwhile, and we will fall  
Under breezy trees, and loll  
In the shade, with thirsty sight  
Drinking deep the blue delight  
Of the skies that will beguile  
Us as children — afterwhile.*

*Afterwhile — and one intends  
To be gentler to his friends —  
To walk with them, in the hush  
Of still evenings, o'er the plush  
Of home-leading fields, and stand  
Long at parting, hand in hand :  
One, in time, will joy to take  
New resolves for someone's sake,  
And wear then the look that lies  
Clear and pure in other eyes —  
He will soothe and reconcile  
His own conscience — afterwhile.*

*Afterwhile — we have in view  
A far scene to journey to, —  
Where the old home is, and where  
The old mother waits us there,  
Peering, as the time grows late,  
Down the old path to the gate. —  
How we'll click the latch that locks  
In the pinks and hollyhocks,  
And leap up the path once more  
Where she waits us at the door ! —  
How we'll greet the dear old smile,  
And the warm tears — afterwhile !*

*Ah, the endless afterwhiles! —  
Leagues on leagues, and miles on miles,  
In the distance far withdrawn,  
Stretching on, and on, and on,  
Till the fancy is footsore  
And faints in the dust before  
The last milestone's granite face,  
Hacked with: Here Beginneth Space.  
O far glimmering worlds and wings,  
Mystic smiles and beckonings,  
Lead us, through the shadowy aisles  
Out into the afterwhiles.*



*HERR WEISER.*

**H**ERR WEISER! — Three-score-years-and-ten, —  
A hale white rose of his countrymen,  
Transplanted here in the Hoosier loam,  
And blossomy as his German home —  
As blossomy, and as pure and sweet  
As the cool green glen of his calm retreat,  
Far withdrawn from the noisy town  
Where trade goes clamoring up and down,  
Whose fret and fever, and stress and strife  
May not trouble his tranquil life!

Breath of rest, what a balmy gust! —  
Quit of the city's heat and dust,  
Jostling down by the winding road,  
Through the orchard ways of his quaint abode. —  
Tether the horse, as we onward fare  
Under the pear-trees trailing there,  
And thumping the wooden bridge at night  
With lumps of ripeness and lush delight,  
Till the stream, as it maunders on till dawn,  
Is powdered and pelted and smiled upon.

Herr Weiser, with his wholesome face,  
And the gentle blue of his eyes, and grace  
Of unassuming honesty,  
Be there to welcome you and me!  
And what though the toil of the farm be stopped  
And the tireless plans of the place be dropped,  
While the prayerful master's knees are set  
In beds of pansy, and mignonette,  
And lily and aster and columbine,  
Offered in love, as yours and mine?—

What, but a blessing of kindly thought,  
Sweet as the breath of forget-me-not!—  
What, but a spirit of lustrous love  
White as the aster he bends above!—  
What, but an odorous memory  
Of the dear old man, made known to me  
In days demanding a help like his,—  
As sweet as the life of the lily is—  
As sweet as the soul of a babe, bloom-wise  
Born of a lily in paradise.



*THE BEAUTIFUL CITY.*

THE BEAUTIFUL CITY! Forever  
Its rapturous praises resound;  
We fain would behold it—but never  
A glimpse of its glory is found:  
We slacken our lips at the tender  
White breasts of our mothers to hear  
Of its marvelous beauty and splendor;—  
We see—but the gleam of a tear!

Yet never the story may tire us—  
First graven in symbols of stone—  
Rewritten on scrolls of papyrus,  
And parchment, and scattered and blown  
By the winds of the tongues of all nations,  
Like a litter of leaves wildly whirled  
Down the rack of a hundred translations,  
From the earliest lisp of the world.

We compass the earth and the ocean,  
From the Orient's uttermost light,  
To where the last ripple in motion  
Lips hem of the skirt of the night,—  
But The Beautiful City evades us—  
No spire of it glints in the sun—  
No glad-bannered battlement shades us  
When all our long journey is done.

Where lies it? We question and listen;  
We lean from the mountain, or mast,  
And see but dull earth, or the glisten  
Of seas inconceivably vast:  
The dust of the one blurs our vision—  
The glare of the other our brain,  
Nor city nor island elysian  
In all of the land or the main!

We kneel in dim fanes where the thunders  
Of organs tumultuous roll,  
And the longing heart listens and wonders,  
And the eyes look aloft from the soul,

But the chanson grows fainter and fainter,  
Swoons wholly away and is dead;  
And our eyes only reach where the painter  
Has dabbled a saint overhead.

The Beautiful City! O mortal,  
Fare hopefully on in thy quest,  
Pass down through the green grassy portal  
That leads to the Valley of Rest,  
There first passed the One who, in pity  
Of all thy great yearning, awaits  
To point out The Beautiful City,  
And loosen the trump at the gates.

*LOCKERBIE STREET.*

SUCH a dear little street it is, nestled away  
From the noise of the city and heat of the day,  
In cool shady coverts of whispering trees,  
With their leaves lifted up to shake hands with the  
breeze  
Which in all its wide wanderings never may meet  
With a resting-place fairer than Lockerbie street!

There is such a relief, from the clangor and din  
Of the heart of the town, to go loitering in  
Through the dim, narrow walks, with the sheltering  
shade  
Of the trees waving over the long promenade,  
And littering lightly the ways of our feet  
With the gold of the sunshine of Lockerbie street.

And the nights that come down the dark pathways  
of dusk,  
With the stars in their tresses, and odors of musk

In their moon-woven raiments, bespangled with dew,  
And looped up with lilies for lovers to use  
In the songs that they sing to the tinkle and beat  
Of their sweet serenadings through Lockerbie street.

O, my Lockerbie street! You are fair to be seen —  
Be it noon of the day, or the rare and serene  
Afternoon of the night — you are one to my heart,  
And I love you above all the phrases of art,  
For no language could frame, and no lips could  
repeat  
My rhyme-haunted raptures of Lockerbie street.

*DAS KRIST KINDEL.*

I HAD fed the fire and stirred it, till the sparkles  
in delight  
Snapped their saucy little fingers at the chill Decem-  
ber night;  
And in dressing-gown and slippers, I had tilted back  
“my throne”—  
The old split-bottomed rocker—and was musing all  
alone.

I could hear the hungry Winter prowling round the  
outer door,  
And the tread of muffled footsteps on the white  
piazza floor;  
But the sounds came to me only as the murmur of a  
stream  
That mingled with the current of a lazy-flowing  
dream.

Like a fragrant incense rising, curled the smoke of  
my cigar,  
With the lamp-light gleaming through it like a mist-  
enfolded star ; —  
And as I gazed, the vapor like a curtain rolled away,  
With a sound of bells that tinkled, and the clatter  
of a sleigh.

And in a vision, painted like a picture in the air,  
I saw the elfish figure of a man with frosty hair —  
A quaint old man that chuckled with a laugh as he  
appeared,  
And with ruddy cheeks like embers in the ashes of  
his beard.

He poised himself grotesquely, in an attitude of  
mirth,  
On a damask-covered hassock that was sitting on the  
hearth ;  
And at a magic signal of his stubby little thumb,  
I saw the fireplace changing to a bright proscenium.

And looking there, I marveled as I saw a mimic  
stage  
Alive with little actors of a very tender age ;  
And some so very tiny that they tottered as they  
walked,  
And lisped and purled and gurgled like the brook-  
lets, when they talked.

And their faces were like lilies, and their eyes like  
purest dew,  
And their tresses like the shadows that the shine is  
woven through ;  
And they each had little burdens, and a little tale to  
tell  
Of fairy lore, and giants, and delights delectable.

And they mixed and intermingled, weaving melody  
with joy,  
Till the magic circle clustered round a blooming  
baby-boy ;  
And they threw aside their treasures in an ecstasy of  
glee,  
And bent, with dazzled faces, and with parted lips,  
to see.



'Twas a wondrous little fellow, with a dainty double-  
chin,  
And chubby cheeks, and dimples for the smiles to  
blossom in ;  
And he looked as ripe and rosy, on his bed of straw  
and reeds,  
As a mellow little pippin that had tumbled in the  
weeds.

And I saw the happy mother, and a group surround-  
ing her,  
That knelt with costly presents of frankincense and  
myrrh ;  
And I thrilled with awe and wonder, as a murmur  
on the air  
Came drifting o'er the hearing in a melody of  
prayer : —

*By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the  
sea,  
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—  
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the  
knee  
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.*

*Thy messenger has spoken, and our doubts have fled and  
gone*

*As the dark and spectral shadows of the night before  
the dawn;*

*And, in the kindly shelter of the light around us drawn,  
We would nestle down forever in the breast we lean upon.*

*You have given us a shepherd — You have given us a  
guide,*

*And the light of Heaven grew dimmer when You sent  
Him from Your side,—*

*But He comes to lead Thy children where the gates  
will open wide*

*To welcome His returning when His works are glorified.*

*By the splendor in the Heavens, and the hush upon the  
sea,*

*And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—*

*We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the  
knee*

*And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.*

Then the vision, slowly failing, with the words of  
the refrain,  
Fell swooning in the moonlight through the frosty  
window-pane ;  
And I heard the clock proclaiming, like an eager  
sentinel  
Who brings the world good tidings, — “It is Christ-  
mas — all is well !”

*ANSELMO.*

YEARS did I vainly seek the good Lord's grace,—  
Prayed, fasted and did penance dire and dread;  
Did kneel with bleeding knees and rainy face,  
And mouth the dust, with ashes on my head;  
Yea, still, with knotted scourge the flesh I flayed,  
Rent fresh the wounds, and moaned and shrieked  
insanely;  
And froth oozed with the pleadings that I made,  
And yet I prayed on vainly, vainly, vainly!

A time, from out of swoon, I lifted eye,  
To find a wretched outcast, gray and grim,  
Bathing<sup>ing</sup> my brow, with many a pitying sigh,  
And I did pray God's grace might rest on him.—  
Then, lo! a gentle voice fell on mine ears—  
“Thou shalt not sob in suppliance hereafter;  
Take up thy prayers and wring them dry of tears,  
And lift them, white and pure, with love and  
laughter!”

So is it now for all men else I pray;  
So is it I am blest and glad away.

*A HOME-MADE FAIRY TALE.*

BUD, come here to your Uncle a spell,  
And I'll tell you something you mustn't tell —  
For it's a secret and shore-nuff true,  
And maybe I oughtn't to tell it to you! —  
But out in the garden, under the shade  
Of the apple-trees, where we romped and played  
Till the moon was up, and you thought I'd gone  
Fast asleep,—That was all put on!  
For I was a-watchin' something queer  
Goin' on there in the grass, my dear! —  
'Way down deep in it, there I sec  
A little dude fairy who winked at me,  
And snapped his fingers, and laughed as low  
And fine as the whine of a mus-kee-to!  
I kept still—watchin' him closer—and  
I noticed a little guitar in his hand,  
Which he leant 'ginst a little dead bee—and laid  
His cigarette down on a clean grass-blade;

And then climbed up on the shell of a snail —  
Carefully dusting his swallowtail —  
And pulling up, by a waxed web-thread,  
This little guitar, you remember, I said !  
And there he trinkled and trilled a tune —  
“ My Love, so fair, Tans in the Moon ! ”  
Till, presently, out of the clover-top  
He seemed to be singing to, came, k'pop !  
The purtiest, daintiest fairy face  
In all this world, or any place !  
Then the little ser'nader waved his hand,  
As much as to say, “ We'll excuse *you* ! ” and  
I heard, as I squinted my eyelids to,  
A kiss like the drip of a drop of dew !

*THE SOUTH WIND AND THE SUN.*

O THE South Wind and the Sun!  
How each loved the other one—  
Full of fancy—full of folly—  
Full of jollity and fun!  
How they romped and ran about,  
Like two boys when school is out,  
With glowing face, and lisping lip,  
Low laugh, and lifted shout!

And the South Wind—he was dressed  
With a ribbon round his breast  
That floated, flapped and fluttered  
In a riotous unrest,  
And a drapery of mist,  
From the shoulder and the wrist  
Flowing backward with the motion  
Of the waving hand he kissed.

And the Sun had on a crown  
Wrought of gilded thistledown,  
And a scarf of velvet vapor,  
And a raveled-rainbow gown;  
And his tinsel-tangled hair,  
Tossed and lost upon the air,  
Was glossier and flossier  
Than any anywhere.

And the South Wind's eyes were two  
Little dancing drops of dew,  
As he puffed his cheeks, and pursed his lips,  
And blew and blew and blew!  
And the Sun's—like diamond-stone,  
Brighter yet than ever known,  
As he knit his brows and held his breath,  
And shone and shone and shone!

And this pair of merry fays  
Wandered through the summer days;  
Arm-in-arm they went together  
Over heights of morning haze—



Over slanting slopes of lawn  
They went on and on and on,  
Where the daisies looked like star-tracks  
Trailing up and down the dawn.

And where'er they found the top  
Of a wheat-stalk droop and lop  
They chucked it underneath the chin  
And praised the lavish crop,  
Till it lifted with the pride  
Of the heads it grew beside,  
And then the South Wind and the Sun  
Went onward satisfied.

Over meadow-lands they tripped,  
Where the dandelions dipped  
In crimson foam of clover-bloom,  
And dripped and dripped and dripped;  
And they clinched the bumble-stings,  
Gauming honey on their wings,  
And bundling them in lily-bells,  
With maudlin murmurings.

And the humming-bird, that hung  
Like a jewel up among  
The tilted honeysuckle-horns,  
They mesmerized, and swung  
In the palpitating air,  
Drowsed with odors strange and rare,  
And, with whispered laughter, slipped away,  
And left him hanging there.

And they braided blades of grass  
Where the truant had to pass;  
And they wriggled through the rushes  
And the reeds of the morass,  
Where they danced, in rapture sweet,  
O'er the leaves that laid a street  
Of undulant mosaic for  
The touches of their feet.

By the brook with mossy brink,  
Where the cattle came to drink,  
They trilled and piped and whistled  
With the thrush and bobolink,

Till the kine, in listless pause,  
Switched their tails in mute applause,  
With lifted heads, and dreamy eyes,  
And bubble-dripping jaws.

And where the melons grew,  
Streaked with yellow, green and blue,  
These jolly sprites went wandering  
Through spangled paths of dew;  
And the melons, here and there,  
They made love to, everywhere,  
Turning their pink souls to crimson  
With caresses fond and fair.

Over orchard walls they went,  
Where the fruited boughs were bent  
Till they brushed the sward beneath them  
Where the shine and shadow blent;  
And the great green pear they shook  
Till the fallow hue forsook  
Its features, and the gleam of gold  
Laughed out in every look.

And they stroked the downy cheek  
Of the peach, and smoothed it sleek,  
And flushed it into splendor;  
And, with many an elfish freak,  
Gave the russet's rust a wipe—  
Prankt the rambo with a stripe,  
And the winesap blushed its reddest  
As they spanked the pippins ripe.

Through the woven ambushade  
That the twining vines had made,  
They found the grapes, in clusters,  
Drinking up the shine and shade—  
Plumpt, like tiny skins of wine,  
With a vintage so divine  
That the tongue of fancy tingled  
With the tang of muscadine.

And the golden-banded bees,  
Droning o'er the flowery leas,  
They bridled, reined, and rode away  
Across the fragrant breeze,

Till in hollow oak and elm  
They had groomed and stabled them  
In waxen stalls that oozed with dew  
Of rose and lily-stem.

Where the dusty highway leads,  
High above the wayside weeds,  
They sowed the air with butterflies  
Like blooming flower-seeds,  
Till the dull grasshopper sprung  
Half a man's height up, and hung  
Tranced in the heat, with whirring wings,  
And sung and sung and sung!

And they loitered, hand in hand,  
Where the snipe along the sand  
Of the river ran to meet them  
As the ripple meets the land,  
Till the dragonfly, in light  
Gauzy armor, burnished bright,  
Came tilting down the waters  
In a wild, bewildered flight.

And they heard the killdee's call,  
And afar, the waterfall,  
But the rustle of a falling leaf  
They heard above it all;  
And the trailing willow crept  
Deeper in the tide that swept  
The leafy shallop to the shore,  
And wept and wept and wept!

And the fairy vessel veered  
From its moorings — tacked and steered  
For the center of the current —  
Sailed away and disappeared:  
And the burthen that it bore  
From the long-enchanted shore —  
“Alas! the South Wind and the Sun!”  
I murmur evermore.

For the South Wind and the Sun,  
Each so loves the other one,  
For all his jolly folly,  
And frivolity and fun,

That our love for them they weigh  
As their fickle fancies may,  
And when at last we love them most,  
They laugh and sail away.

✓

*THE LOST KISS.*

I PUT by the half-written poem,  
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,  
Writes on,—“Had I words to complete it,  
Who’d read it, or who’d understand?”  
But the little bare feet on the stairway,  
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,  
And the eerie-low lisp on the silence,  
Cry up to me over it all.

So I gather it up—where was broken  
The tear-faded thread of my theme,  
Telling how, as one night I sat writing,  
A fairy broke in on my dream,  
A little inquisitive fairy—  
My own little girl, with the gold  
Of the sun in her hair, and the dewy  
Blue eyes of the fairies of old.



'Twas the dear little girl that I scolded —  
    “For was it a moment like this,”  
I said, “when she knew I was busy,  
    To come romping in for a kiss?—  
Come rowdying up from her mother,  
    And clamoring there at my knee  
For ‘One ’ittle kiss for my dolly,  
    And one ’ittle uzzer for me!’”

God pity the heart that repelled her,  
    And the cold hand that turned her away!  
And take, from the lips that denied her,  
    This answerless prayer of to-day!  
Take, Lord, from my mem’ry forever  
    That pitiful sob of despair,  
And the patter and trip of the little bare feet,  
    And the one piercing cry on the stair!

I put by the half-written poem,  
    While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,  
Writes on, “Had I words to complete it,  
    Who’d read it, or who’d understand?”

But the little bare feet on the stairway,  
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,  
And the eerie-low lisp on the silence,  
Cry up to me over it all.

*THE SPHINX.*

I KNOW all about the Sphinx—  
I know even what she thinks,  
Staring with her stony eyes  
Up forever at the skies.

For last night I dreamed that she  
Told me all the mystery—  
Why for æons mute she sat:—  
She was just cut out for that!

*IF I KNEW WHAT POETS KNOW.*

IF I knew what poets know,  
Would I write a rhyme  
Of the buds that never blow  
In the summer time?  
Would I sing of golden seeds  
Springing up in ironweeds?  
And of raindrops turned to snow,  
If I knew what poets know?

Did I know what poets do,  
Would I sing a song  
Sadder than the pigeon's coo  
When the days are long?  
Where I found a heart in pain,  
I would make it glad again;  
And the false should be the true,  
Did I know what poets do.

If I knew what poets know,  
I would find a theme  
Sweeter than the placid flow  
Of the fairest dream;  
I would sing of love that lives  
On the errors it forgives,  
And the world would better grow  
If I knew what poets know.

*IKE WALTON'S PRAYER.*

I CRAVE, dear Lord,  
No boundless hoard  
Of gold and gear,  
Nor jewels fine,  
Nor lands, nor kine,  
Nor treasure-heaps of anything.—  
Let but a little hut be mine  
Where at the hearthstone I may hear  
The cricket sing,  
And have the shine  
Of one glad woman's eyes to make,  
For my poor sake,  
Our simple home a place divine;—  
Just the wee cot—the cricket's chirr—  
Love, and the smiling face of her.

I pray not for  
Great riches, nor  
For vast estates, and castle-halls,—  
Give me to hear the bare footfalls  
Of children o'er  
An oaken floor,  
New-rinsed with sunshine, or bespread  
With but the tiny coverlet  
And pillow for the baby's head;  
And, pray Thou, may  
The door stand open and the day  
Send ever in a gentle breeze,  
With fragrance from the locust-trees,  
And drowsy moan of doves, and blur  
Of robin-chirps, and drone of bees,  
With afterhushes of the stir  
Of intermingling sounds, and then  
The good-wife and the smile of her  
Filling the silences again—  
The cricket's call,  
And the wee cot,  
Dear Lord of all,  
Deny me not!

I pray not that  
Men tremble at  
    My power of place  
        And lordly sway,—  
I only pray for simple grace  
To look my neighbor in the face  
    Full honestly from day to day—  
Yield me his horny palm to hold,  
    And I'll not pray  
        For gold;—  
The tanned face, garlanded with mirth,  
It hath the kingliest smile on earth—  
The swart brow, diamonded with sweat,  
Hath never need of coronet.  
    And so I reach,  
        Dear Lord, to Thee,  
    And do beseech  
        Thou givest me  
The wee cot, and the cricket's chirr,  
Love, and the glad sweet face of her!



*A ROUGH SKETCH.*

I CAUGHT, for a second, across the crowd—  
Just for a second, and barely that—  
A face, pox-pitted and evil-browed,  
Hid in the shade of a slouch-rim'd hat—  
With small, gray eyes, of a look as keen  
As the long, sharp nose that grew between.

And I said: 'Tis a sketch of Nature's own,  
Drawn i' the dark o' the moon, I swear,  
On a tatter of Fate that the winds have blown  
Hither and thither and everywhere—  
With its keen little sinister eyes of gray,  
And nose like the beak of a bird of prey!

*OUR KIND OF A MAN.*

I.

THE kind of a man for you and me!  
He faces the world unflinchingly,  
And smites, as long as the wrong resists,  
With a knuckled faith and force like fists:  
He lives the life he is preaching of,  
And loves where most is the need of love;  
His voice is clear to the deaf man's ears,  
And his face sublime through the blind man's  
tears;  
The light shines out where the clouds were dim,  
And the widow's prayer goes up for him;  
The latch is clicked at the hovel door,  
And the sick man sees the sun once more,  
And out o'er the barren fields he sees  
Springing blossoms and waving trees,  
Feeling as only the dying may,  
That God's own servant has come that way,

Smoothing the path as it still winds on  
Through the golden gate where his loved have  
gone.

II.

The kind of a man for me and you!  
However little of worth we do  
He credits full, and abides in trust  
That time will teach us how more is just.  
He walks abroad, and he meets all kinds  
Of querulous and uneasy minds,  
And, sympathizing, he shares the pain  
Of the doubts that rack us, heart and brain;  
And, knowing this, as we grasp his hand,  
We are surely coming to understand!  
He looks on sin with pitying eyes—  
E'en as the Lord, since Paradise,—  
Else, should we read, though our sins should glow  
As scarlet, they shall be white as snow?—  
And feeling still, with a grief half glad,  
That the bad are as good as the good are bad,  
He strikes straight out for the Right—and he  
Is the kind of a man for you and me!

*THE HARPER.*

LIKE a drift of faded blossoms  
Caught in a slanting rain,  
His fingers glimpsed down the strings of his harp  
In a tremulous refrain.

Patter, and tinkle, and drip, and drip!  
Ah! but the chords were rainy sweet!  
And I closed my eyes and I bit my lip,  
As he played there in the street.

Patter, and drip, and tinkle!  
And there was the little bed  
In the corner of the garret,  
And the rafters overhead!

And there was the little window—  
Tinkle, and drip, and drip!—  
The rain above, and a mother's love,  
And God's companionship!

*OLD AUNT MARY'S.*

WASN'T it pleasant, O brother mine,  
In those old days of the lost sunshine  
Of youth — when the Saturday's chores were  
through,  
And the "Sunday's wood" in the kitchen, too,  
And we went visiting, "me and you,"  
Out to Old Aunt Mary's?

It all comes back so clear to-day!  
Though I am as bald as you are gray —  
Out by the barn-lot, and down the lane,  
We patter along in the dust again,  
As light as the tips of the drops of the rain,  
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!

We cross the pasture, and through the wood  
Where the old gray snag of the poplar stood,  
Where the hammering "red-heads" hopped awry,  
And the buzzard "raised" in the "clearing"-sky,  
And lolled and circled, as we went by  
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And then in the dust of the road again;  
And the teams we met, and the countrymen;  
And the long highway, with sunshine spread  
As thick as butter on country bread,  
Our cares behind, and our hearts ahead  
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

Why, I see her now in the open door,  
Where the little gourds grew up the sides, and o'er  
The clapboard roof!—And her face—ah, me!  
Wasn't it good for a boy to see—  
And wasn't it good for a boy to be  
Out to Old Aunt Mary's?

And O my brother, so far away,  
This is to tell you she waits to-day  
To welcome us:—Aunt Mary fell  
Asleep this morning, whispering, “Tell  
The boys to come!” And all is well  
Out to Old Aunt Mary’s.

*ILLILEO.*

**I**LLILEO, the moonlight seemed lost across the  
vales —

The stars but strewed the azure as an armor's  
scattered scales;

The airs of night were quiet as the breath of  
silken sails,

And all your words were sweeter than the notes  
of nightingales.

Illileo Legardi, in the garden there alone,  
With your figure carved of fervor, as the Psyche  
carved of stone,

There came to me no murmur of the fountain's  
undertone

So mystically, musically mellow as your own.



You whispered low, Illileo—so low the leaves  
were mute,  
And the echoes faltered breathless in your voice's  
vain pursuit;  
And there died the distant dalliance of the  
serenader's lute:  
And I held you in my bosom as the husk may  
hold the fruit.

Illileo, I listened. I believed you. In my bliss,  
What were all the worlds above me since I found  
you thus in this?—  
Let them reeling reach to win me—even Heaven  
I would miss,  
Grasping earthward!—I would cling here, though  
I clung by just a kiss.

And blossoms should grow odorless—and lilies all  
aghast—  
And I said the stars should slacken in their paces  
through the vast,

Ere yet my loyalty should fail enduring to the  
last. —

So vowed I. It is written. It is changeless as  
the past.

Miles Legarzi, in the shade your palace throws  
Like a cowl about the singer at your gilded  
porchess,

A moon goes with the music that may vex the  
high repose

Of a heart that fades and crumbles as the crimson  
of a rose.

*THE KING.*

THEY rode right out of the morning sun —  
A glimmering, glittering cavalcade  
Of knights and ladies, and every one  
    In princely sheen arrayed;  
And the king of them all, O he rode ahead,  
With a helmet of gold, and a plume of red  
That spurted about in the breeze and bled  
    In the bloom of the everglade.

And they rode high over the dewy lawu,  
    With brave, glad banners of every hue,  
That rolled in ripples, as they rode on  
    In splendor, two and two;  
And the tinkling links of the golden reins  
Of the steeds they rode rang such refrains  
As the castanets in a dream of Spain's  
    Intensest gold and blue.



And a dreamer's eyes they are downward cast,  
As he blends these words with the wailing blast:  
"It is the King of the Year rides past!"  
And Autumn is here again.

*A BRIDE.*

“O I AM weary!” she sighed, as her billowy  
Hair she unloosed in a torrent of gold

That rippled and fell o’er a figure as willowy,

Graceful and fair as a goddess of old:

Over her jewels she flung herself drearily,

Crumpled the laces that snowed on her breast,

Crushed with her fingers the lily that wearily

Clung in her hair like a dove in its nest.

—And naught but her shadowy form in the  
mirror

To kneel in dumb agony down and weep  
near her!

“Weary?”—of what? Could we fathom the mys-  
tery?—

Lift up the lashes weighed down by her tears,  
And wash with their dews one white face from her  
history,

Set like a gem in the red rust of years?  
Nothing will rest her—unless he who died of her  
    Strayed from his grave, and, in place of the groom,  
Tipping her face, kneeling there by the side of her,  
    Drained the old kiss to the dregs of his doom.  
    —And naught but that shadowy form in the  
        mirror  
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep  
    near her!

*THE DEAD LOVER.*

TIME is so long when a man is dead!  
Some one sews; and the room is made  
Very clean; and the light is shed  
Soft through the window-shade.

Yesterday I thought: "I know  
Just how the bells will sound, and how  
The friends will talk, and the sermon go,  
And the hearse-horse bow and bow!"

This is to-day; and I have no thing  
To think of—nothing whatever to do  
But to hear the throb of the pulse of a wing  
That wants to fly back to you.



*A SONG.*

THERE is ever a song somewhere, my dear;  
There is ever a something sings alway:  
There's the song of the lark when the skies are clear,  
And the song of the thrush when the skies are gray.  
The sunshine showers across the grain,  
And the bluebird trills in the orchard tree;  
And in and out, when the eaves drip rain,  
The swallows are twittering ceaselessly.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,  
Be the skies above or dark or fair,  
There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—  
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear—  
There is ever a song somewhere!

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,  
In the midnight black, or the mid-day blue;  
The robin pipes when the sun is here,  
And the cricket chirrups the whole night through.  
The buds may blow and the fruit may grow,  
And the autumn leaves drop crisp and sere;  
But whether the sun, or the rain, or the snow,  
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear.

✓

*WHEN BESSIE DIED.*

If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,  
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;  
If the white feet into the grave had tripped—

WHEN Bessie died—  
We braided the brown hair, and tied  
It just as her own little hands  
Had fastened back the silken strands  
A thousand times—the crimson bit  
Of ribbon woven into it  
That she had worn with childish pride—  
Smoothed down the dainty bow—and cried—  
When Bessie died.

When Bessie died—  
We drew the nursery blinds aside,  
And, as the morning in the room  
Burst like a primrose into bloom,

Her pet canary's cage we hung  
Where she might hear him when he sung —  
And yet not any note he tried,  
Though she lay listening folded-eyed.

When Bessie died —  
We writhed in prayer unsatisfied;  
We begged of God, and He did smile  
In silence on us all the while;  
And we did see Him, through our tears,  
Enfolding that fair form of hers,  
She laughing back against His love  
The kisses we had nothing of—  
And death to us he still denied,  
When Bessie died —

When Bessie died.

*THE SHOWER.*

THE landscape, like the awed face of a child,  
Grew curiously blurred; a hush of death  
Fell on the fields, and in the darkened wild  
The zephyr held its breath.

No wavering glamour-work of light and shade  
Dappled the shivering surface of the brook;  
The frightened ripples in their ambushade  
Of willows thrilled and shook.

The sullen day grew darker, and anon  
Dim flashes of pent anger lit the sky;  
With rumbling wheels of wrath came rolling on  
The storm's artillery.

The cloud above put on its blackest frown,  
And then, as with a vengeful cry of pain,  
The lightning snatched it, ripped and flung it down  
In raveled shreds of rain :

While I, transfigured by some wondrous art,  
Bowed with the thirsty lilies to the sod,  
My empty soul brimmed over, and my heart  
Drenched with the love of God.

✓

*A LIFE-LESSON.*

THERE! little girl; don't cry!  
They have broken your doll, I know;  
And your tea-set blue,  
And your play-house, too,  
Are things of the long ago;  
But childish troubles will soon pass by.—  
There! little girl; don't cry!

There! little girl; don't cry!  
They have broken your slate, I know;  
And the glad, wild ways  
Of your school-girl days  
Are things of the long ago;  
But life and love will soon come by.—  
There! little girl; don't cry!

There! little girl; don't cry!  
They have broken your heart, I know;  
And the rainbow gleams  
Of your youthful dreams  
Are things of the long ago;  
But heaven holds all for which you  
sigh.—  
There! little girl; don't cry!



*A SCRAWL.*

I WANT to sing something—but this is all—  
I try and I try, but the rhymes are dull,  
As though they were damp, and the echoes fall  
Limp and unlovable.

Words will not say what I yearn to say—  
They will not walk as I want them to;  
But they stumble and fall in the path of the way  
Of my telling my love for **you**.

Simply take what the scrawl is worth—  
Knowing I love you as sun the sod  
On the ripening side of the great round earth  
That swings in the smile of God.

✓

AWAY.

I CAN NOT say, and I will not say  
That he is dead.—He is just away!

With a cheery smile, and a wave of the hand,  
He has wandered into an unknown land,

And left us dreaming how very fair  
It needs must be, since he lingers there.

And you—O you, who the wildest yearn  
For the old-time step and the glad return,—

Think of him faring on, as dear  
In the love of There as the love of Here;

And loyal still, as he gave the blows  
Of his warrior-strength to his country's foes.—

Mild and gentle, as he was brave,—  
When the sweetest love of his life he gave

To simple things:—Where the violets grew  
Pure as the eyes they were likened to,

The touches of his hands have strayed  
As reverently as his lips have prayed:

When the little brown thrush that harshly chirred  
Was dear to him as the mocking-bird;

And he pitied as much as a man in pain  
A writhing honey-bee wet with rain.—

Think of him still as the same, I say:  
He is not dead—he is just away!

*WHO BIDES HIS TIME.*

WHO bides his time, and day by day  
Faces defeat full patiently,  
And lifts a mirthful roundelay,  
However poor his fortunes be,—  
He will not fail in any qualm  
Of poverty — the paltry dime  
It will grow golden in his palm,  
Who bides his time.

Who bides his time — he tastes the sweet  
Of honey in the saltiest tear;  
And though he fares with slowest feet,  
Joy runs to meet him, drawing near;  
The birds are heralds of his cause,  
And like a never-ending rhyme,  
The roadsides bloom in his applause,  
Who bides his time.

Who bides his time, and fevers not  
In the hot race that none achieves,  
Shall wear cool-wreathen laurel, wrought  
With crimson berries in the leaves;  
And he shall reign a goodly king,  
And sway his hand o'er every clime,  
With peace writ on his signet ring,  
Who bides his time.

*FROM THE HEADBOARD OF A GRAVE IN  
PARAGUAY.*

A TROTH, and a grief, and a blessing,  
Disguised them and came this way,—  
And one was a promise, and one was a doubt,  
And one was a rainy day.

And they met betimes with this maiden,—  
And the promise it spake and lied,  
And the doubt it gibbered and hugged itself,  
And the rainy day—she died.

*LAUGHTER HOLDING BOTH HIS SIDES.*

AYE, thou varlet! Laugh away!  
All the world's a holiday!  
Laugh away, and roar and shout  
Till thy hoarse tongue lolleth out!  
Bloat thy cheeks, and bulge thine eyes  
Unto bursting, pelt thy thighs  
With thy swollen palms, and roar  
As thou never hast before!  
Lustier! wilt thou! peal on peal!  
Stiflest? Squat and grind thy heel —  
Wrestle with thy loins, and then  
Wheeze thee whiles, and whoop again!





SONNETS



*PAN.*

THIS PAN is but an idle god, I guess,  
Since all the fair midsummer of my dreams  
He loiters listlessly by woody streams,  
Soaking the lush glooms up with laziness;  
Or drowsing while the maiden-winds caress  
Him prankishly, and powder him with  
gleams  
Of sifted sunshine. And he ever seems  
Drugged with a joy unutterable—unless  
His low pipes whistle hints of it far out  
Across the ripples to the dragonfly  
That, like a wind-born blossom blown about,  
Drops quiveringly down, as though to die—  
Then lifts and wavers on, as if in doubt  
Whether to fan his wings or fly without.

*DUSK.*

THE frightened herds of clouds across the sky  
Trample the sunshine down, and chase the day  
Into the dusky forest-lands of gray  
And sombre twilight. Far, and faint, and high,  
The wild goose trails his harrow, with a cry  
Sad as the wail of some poor castaway  
Who sees a vessel drifting far astray  
Of his last hope, and lays him down to die.  
The children, riotous from school, grow bold,  
And quarrel with the wind whose angry gust  
Plucks off the summer-hat, and flaps the fold  
Of many a crimson cloak, and twirls the dust  
In spiral shapes grotesque, and dims the gold  
Of gleaming tresses with the blur of rust.

*JUNE.*

O QUEENLY month of indolent repose!  
I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume,  
As in thy downy lap of clover-bloom  
I nestle like a drowsy child, and doze  
The lazy hours away. The zephyr throws  
The shifting shuttle of the summer's loom,  
And weaves a damask-work of gleam and  
gloom  
Before thy listless feet: The lily blows  
A bugle-call of fragrance o'er the glade;  
And, wheeling into ranks, with plume and  
spear,  
Thy harvest-armies gather on parade;  
While, faint and far away, yet pure and  
clear,  
A voice calls out of alien lands of shade,—  
“All hail the Peerless Goddess of the Year!”

*SILENCE.*

THOUSANDS and thousands of hushed years  
ago,

Out on the edge of Chaos, all alone

I stood on peaks of vapor, high upthrown

Above a sea that knew nor ebb nor flow,

Nor any motion won of winds that blow,

Nor any sound of watery wail or moan,

Nor lisp of wave, nor wandering undertone

Of any tide lost in the night below.

So still it was, I mind me, as I laid

My thirsty ear against mine own faint sigh

To drink of that, I sipped it, half afraid

'Twas but the ghost of a dead voice spilled by

The one starved star that tottered through the

shade,

And came tiptoeing toward me down the sky.

*TIME.*

I.

THE TICKING —ticking—ticking of the clock!  
That vexed me so last night!—"For though  
Time keeps  
Such drowsy watch," I moaned, "he never  
sleeps,  
But only nods above the world to mock  
Its restless occupant, then rudely rock  
It as the cradle of a babe that weeps!"  
I seemed to see the seconds piled in heaps  
Like sand about me; and at every shock  
Of the harsh bell, tolling a new hour's birth,  
The sandy pyramids were swirled away  
As by a desert-storm that swept the earth  
Stark as a granary floor, whereon the gray  
And mist-bedrizzled moon amidst the dearth  
Came crawling, like a sickly child, to lay  
Its pale face next mine own and weep for day.

*TIME.*

II.

Wait for the morning! Ah! we wait indeed  
For daylight, we who toss about through stress  
Of vacant-armed desires and emptiness  
Of all the warm, warm touches that we need,  
And the warm kisses upon which we feed  
Our famished lips in fancy! May God bless  
The starved lips of us with but one caress  
Warm as the yearning blood our poor hearts  
bleed!  
. . . . A wild prayer!—bite thy pillow, praying  
so —  
Toss this side, and whirl that, and moan for  
dawn;  
Let the clock's seconds dribble out their woe,  
And Time be drained of sorrow! Long ago  
We heard the crowing cock, with answer  
drawn,  
As hoarsely sad at throat as sobs. . . . Pray  
on!



*SLEEP.*

THOU drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half  
awink,

Muse on me,—drifting out upon thy dreams,  
I lave my soul as in enchanted streams,  
Where reveling satyrs pipe along the brink,  
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,  
Uplift their dangling hooves and down the  
beams

Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor  
seems

An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink

Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,—  
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,  
And siren-arms that coil their sorcery  
About my neck, with kisses so divine,  
The heavens reel above me, and the sea  
Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.

*HER HAIR.*

THE beauty of her hair bewilders me —  
    Pouring adown the brow, its cloven tide  
    Swirling about the ears on either side,  
And storming round the neck tumultuously:  
Or like the lights of old antiquity  
    Through mullioned windows, in cathedrals  
    wide,  
    Spilled moltenly o'er figures deified  
In chastest marble, nude of drapery.  
And so I love it.— Either unconfined;  
    Or plaited in close braidings manifold;  
Or smoothly drawn; or indolently twined  
    In careless knots whose coilings come  
    unrolled  
At any lightest kiss; or by the wind  
    Whipped out in flossy ravelings of gold.

*DEARTH.*

I HOLD your trembling hand to-night—and yet  
I may not know what wealth of bliss is mine,  
My heart is such a curious design  
Of trust and jealousy! Your eyes are wet—  
So must I think they jewel some regret,—  
And lo, the loving arms that round me twine  
Cling only as the tendrils of a vine  
Whose fruit has long been gathered: I forget,  
While crimson clusters of your kisses press  
Their wine out on my lips, my royal fare  
Of rapture, since blind fancy needs must guess  
They once poured out their sweetness  
    otherwhere,  
With fuller flavoring of happiness  
Thén e'en your broken sobs may now declare.

*A VOICE FROM THE FARM.*

IT is my dream to have you here with me,  
Out of the heated city's dust and din —  
Here where the colts have room to gambol in,  
And kine to graze, in clover to the knee.  
I want to see your wan face happily  
Lit with the wholesome smiles that have not  
been  
In use since the old games you used to win  
When we pitched horseshoes: And I want to be  
At utter loaf with you in this dim land  
Of grove and meadow, while the crickets  
make  
Our own talk tedious, and the bat wields  
His bulky flight, as we cease converse, and  
In a dusk like velvet smoothly take  
Our way toward home across the dewy  
fields.

*WHEN SHE COMES HOME.*

WHEN she comes home again! A thousand  
ways

I fashion, to myself, the tenderness

Of my glad welcome: I shall tremble—yes;  
And touch her, as when first in the old days  
I touched her girlish hand, nor dared upraise  
Mine eyes, such was my faint heart's sweet  
distress.

Then silence: And the perfume of her dress:  
The room will sway a little, and a haze

Cloy eyesight—soulsight, even—for a space:  
And tears—yes; and the ache here in the throat,  
To know that I so ill deserve the place  
Her arms make for me; and the sobbing note  
I stay with kisses, ere the tearful face  
Again is hidden in the old embrace.

*ART AND LOVE.*

HE faced his canvas (as a seer whose ken  
Pierces the crust of this existence through)  
And smiled beyond on that his genius knew  
Ere mated with his being. Conscious then  
Of his high theme alone, he smiled again  
Straight back upon himself in many a hue,  
And tint, and light, and shade, which slowly  
grew  
Enfeatured of a fair girl's face, as when  
First time she smiles for love sake with no  
fear.  
So wrought he, witless that behind him leant  
A woman, with old features, dim and sere,  
And glamour'd eyes that felt the brimming  
tear,  
And with a voice, like some sad instrument,  
That sighing said, "I'm dead there; love me  
here!"

IN DIALECT





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*GRIGGSBY'S STATION.*

PAP'S got his patent-right, and rich as all  
creation ;

But where's the peace and comfort that we all  
had before ?

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station —

Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore !

The likes of us a-livin' here ! It's jest a mortal  
pity

To see us in this great big house, with cyarpets  
on the stairs,

And the pump right in the kitchen ! And the  
city ! city ! city ! —

And nothin' but the city all around us  
ever'wheres !

Climb clean above the roof and look from the  
    steeple,  
And never see a robin, nor a beech or ellum  
    tree!  
And right here in ear-shot of at least a thousan'  
    people,  
And none that neighbors with us, or we want  
    to go and see!

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station —  
    Back where the latch-string's a-hangin' from the  
    door,  
And ever' neighbor 'round the place is dear as a  
    relation —  
    Back where we ust to be so happy and so  
    pore!

I want to see the Wiggenses, the whole kit and  
    bilin',  
A-drivin' up from Shallor Ford to stay the  
    Sunday through;  
And I want to see 'em hitchin' at their  
    son-in-law's and pilin'.  
Out there at 'Lizy Ellen's like they ust to do!

I want to see the piece-quilts the Jones girls is  
    makin' ;

And I want to pester Laury 'bout their  
    freckled hired hand,

And joke her 'bout the widower she come purt'  
    nigh a-takin',

Till her pap got his pension 'lowed in time to  
    save his land.

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station —

Back where they's nothin' aggervatin' anymore,  
Shet away safe in the woods around the old  
    location —

Back where we ust to be so happy and so  
    pore !

I want to see Marindy and he'p her with her  
    sewin',

And hear her talk so lovin' of her man that's  
    dead and gone,

And stand up with Emanuel to show me how  
    he's growin',

And smile as I have saw her 'fore she put her  
    mournin' on.

And I want to see the Samples, on the old lower  
eighty —

Where John our oldest boy, he was tuk and  
burried — for

His own sake and Katy's,—and I want to cry  
with Katy

As she reads all his letters over, writ from The  
War.

What's in all this grand life and high situation,  
And nary a pink nor hollyhawk bloomin' at  
the door?—

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station —  
Back where we ust to be so happy and so  
pore!

*KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE.*

I.

TELL you what I like the best—  
'Long about knee-deep in June,  
'Bout the time strawberries melts  
On the vine,—some afternoon  
Like to jes' git out and rest,  
And not work at nothin' else!

II.

Orchard's where I'd ruther be—  
Needn't fence it in fer me!—  
Jes' the whole sky overhead,  
And the whole airth underneath—  
Sorto' so's a man kin breathe  
Like he ort, and kindo' has  
Elbow-room to keerlessly  
Sprawl out len'thways on the grass

Where the shadders thick and soft  
As the kivvers on the bed  
Mother fixes in the loft  
Allus, when they's company!

III.

Jes' a sorto' lazein' there —  
S'lazy, 'at you peek and peer  
Through the wavin' leaves above,  
Like a feller 'ats in love  
And don't know it, ner don't keer!  
Ever'thing you hear and see  
Got some sort o' interest —  
Maybe find a bluebird's nest  
Tucked up there conveyently  
Fer the boys 'ats apt to be  
Up some other apple-tree!  
Watch the swallers skootin' past  
'Bout as peert as you could ast;  
Er the Bobwhite raise and whiz  
Where some other's whistle is.

IV.

Ketch a shadder down below,  
 And look up to find the crow;  
 Er a hawk away up there,  
 'Pearantly froze in the air!—  
     Hear the old hen squawk, and squat  
     Over every chick she's got,  
 Suddent-like!— And she knows where  
     That-air hawk is, well as you!—  
     You jes' bet yer life she do!—  
     Eyes a-glitterin' like glass,  
     Waitin' till he makes a pass!

V.

Pee-wees' singin', to express  
     My opinion's second class,  
 Yit you'll hear 'em more er less;  
     Sapsucks gittin' down to biz,  
 Weedin' out the lonesomeness;  
     Mr. Bluejay, full o' sass,  
     In them base-ball clothes o' his,  
 Sportin' 'round the orchard jes'

Like he owned the premises!  
Sun out in the fields kin sizz,  
But flat on yer back, I guess,  
In the shade's where glory is!  
That's jes' what I'd like to do  
Stiddy fer a year er two!

VI.

Plague! ef they aint sompin' in  
Work 'at kindo' goes ag'in  
My convictions!—'long about  
Here in June especially!—  
Under some old apple tree,  
Jes' a-restin' through and through,  
I could git along without  
Nothin' else at all to do  
Only jes' a-wishin' you  
Was a-gittin' there like me,  
And June was eternity!

VII.

Lay out there and try to see  
Jes' how lazy you kin be!—



Tumble round and souse yer head  
In the clover-bloom, er pull  
Yer straw hat acrost yer eyes,  
And peek through it at the skies,  
Thinkin' of old chums 'ats dead,  
Maybe, smilin' back at you  
In betwixt the beautiful  
Clouds o' gold and white and  
blue! —  
Month a man kin railly love —  
June, you know, I'm talkin' of!

#### VIII.

March aint never nothin' new! —  
Aprile's altogether too  
Brash fer me! and May — I jes'  
'Bominate its promises, —  
Little hints o' sunshine and  
Green around the timber-land —  
A few blossoms, and a few  
Chip-birds, and a sprout er two —  
Drap asleep, and it turns in  
'Fore daylight and snows agin! —

But when June comes—Clear my throat  
With wild honey! Rench my hair  
In the dew! and hold my coat!  
Whoop out loud! and throw my hat! —  
June wants me, and I'm to spare!  
Spread them shadders anywhere,  
I'll git down and waller there,  
And obleeged to you at that!

*WHEN THE HEARSE COMES BACK.*

A THING 'at's 'bout as tryin' as a healthy man  
kin meet

Is some poor feller's funeral a-joggin' 'long the  
street:

The slow hearse and the hosses — slow enough, to  
say the least,

Fer to even tax the patience of the gentleman  
deceased!

The slow scrunch of the gravel — and the slow  
grind of the wheels,—

The slow, slow go of ev'ry woe 'at ev'rybody  
feels!

So I ruther like the contrast when I hear the  
whiplash crack

A quickstep fer the hosses,  
When the

Hearse

Comes

Back!

Meet it goin' to'rds the cemet'ry, you'll want to  
    drap yer eyes—  
But ef the plumes don't fetch you, it'll ketch you  
    otherwise—  
You'll haf to see the caskit, though you'd ort to  
    look away,  
And 'conomize and save yer sighs for any other  
    day!  
Yer sympathizin' won't wake up the sleeper from  
    his rest—  
Yer tears won't thaw them hands o' his 'at's froze  
    acrost his breast!  
And this is why—when airth and sky's a-gittin'  
    blurred and black—  
I like the flash and hurry  
    When the  
        Hearse  
            Comes  
                Back!

It's not 'cause I don't 'preciate it aint no time  
    fer jokes,  
Ner 'cause I got no common human feelin's fer  
    the folks;—

I've went to funerals myse'f, and took on some,  
perhaps,  
E'er my heart's 'bout as mall'able as any other  
chap's,—  
I've buried father, mother — but I'll haf to jes'  
git you  
To “excuse *me*,” as the feller says.— The p'int  
I'm drivin' to  
Is, simply, when we're plum' broke down and all  
knocked out a'whack,  
It he'ps to shape us up, like,  
When the  
Hearse  
Comes  
Back!

The idy! wadin' round here over shoe-mouth deep  
in woe,  
When they's a graded 'pike o' joy and sunshine,  
don't you know!  
When evenin' strikes the pastur', cows'll pull out  
fer the bars,  
And skittish-like from out the night'll prance the  
happy stars.

And so when my time comes to die, and I've got  
    ary friend  
'At wants expressed my last request — I'll, mebbly,  
    rickommend  
To drive slow, ef they haf to, goin' 'long the  
    out'ard track,  
But I'll smile and say, " You speed 'em  
    When the  
        Hearse  
            Comes  
                Back ! "

*A CANARY AT THE FARM.*

FOLKS has ben to town and Sahry  
Fetched 'er home a pet canary,—  
And of all the blame', contrary,  
    Aggervatin' things alive!  
I love music—that's I love it  
When its *free*—and plenty of it;—  
But I kindo' git above it,  
    At a dollar-eighty-five!

Reason's plain as I'm a-sayin',—  
Jes' the idy, now, o' layin'  
Out yer money, and a-payin'  
    Fer a willer-cage and bird,  
When the medder-larks is wingin'  
Round you, and the woods is ringin'  
With the beautifullest singin'  
    That a mortal ever heard!

Sahry's sot, tho',—so I tell her  
He's a purty little feller,  
With his wings o' creamy-yeller,  
    And his eyes keen as a cat;  
And the twitter o' the critter  
'Pears to absolutely glitter!  
Guess I'll haf to go and git her  
    A high-priceter cage 'n that!



*A LIZ-TOWN HUMORIST.*

SETTIN' round the stove, last night,  
Down at Wess's store, was me  
And Mart Strimples, Tunk, and White,  
And Doc Bills, and two er three  
Fellers of the Mudsock tribe  
No use tryin' to describe!  
And says Doc, he says, says he,—  
“Talkin' 'bout good things to eat,  
Ripe mushmillon's hard to beat!”

I chawed on. And Mart he 'lowed  
Wortermillon beat the mush.—  
“Red,” he says, “and juicy—Hush!—  
I'll jes' leave it to the crowd!”  
Then a Mudsock chap, says he,—  
“Punkin's good enough fer me—  
Punkin pies, I mean,” he says,—  
“Them beats millons! What say, Wess?”

I chawed on. And Wess says,—“ Well,  
You jes’ fetch that wife of mine  
All yer wortermillon-rine,  
And she’ll bile it down a spell—  
In with sorgum, I suppose,  
And what else, Lord only knows!—  
But I’m here to tell all hands,  
Them p’serves meets my demands!”

I chawed on. And White he says,—  
“ Well, I’ll jes’ stand in with Wess—  
I’m no hog!” And Tunk says,—“ I  
Guess I’ll pastur’ out on pie  
With the Mudsock boys!” says he;  
“ Now what’s yourn?” he says to me:  
I chawed on—fer -quite a spell—  
Then I speaks up, slow and dry,—  
“ Jes’ tobacker!” I-says-I.—  
And you’d orto’ heerd ’em yell!

*KINGRY'S MILL.*

ON old Brandywine — about  
Where White's Lots is now laid out,  
And the old crick narries down  
To the ditch that splits the town,—  
Kingry's Mill stood: Hardly see  
Where the old dam ust to be;  
Shallor, long, dry trought o' grass  
Where the old race ust to pass!

That's ben forty years ago —  
Forty years of frost and snow —  
Forty years of shade and shine  
Sence them boyhood days o' mine! —  
All the old landmarks o' town,  
Changed about, er rotted down!  
Where's the tanyard? Where's the'still?  
Tell me where's old Kingry's Mill?

Don't seem funder back, to me,  
I'll be dogg'd! than yisterdy,  
Sence us fellers, in bare feet  
And straw hats, went through the wheat,  
Cuttin' crost the shortest shoot  
Fer that-air old ellum-root  
Jest above the mill-dam, where  
The blame' cars now crosses there!

Through the willers down the crick  
We could see the old mill stick  
Its red gable up, as if  
It jest knowed we'd stol'd the skiff!  
See the winders in the sun  
Blink like they was wonderun'  
What the miller ort to do  
With sich boys as me and you!

But old Kingry! — who could fear  
That old chap, with all his cheer? —  
Leanin' at the winder-sill,  
Er the half-door of the mill,

Swoppin' lies, and pokin' fun  
'N jigglin' like his hoppers done,  
Laughin' grists o' gold and red  
Right out o' the wagon-bed!

What did HE keer where we went? —  
“Jest keep out o' devilment,  
And don't fool around the belts,  
Bolts, ner burrs, ner nothin' else  
'Bout the blame *machinery*,  
And that's all I ast!” says-ee.  
Then we'd climb the stairs, and play  
In the bran-bins half the day!

Rickollect the dusty wall,  
And the spider-webs, and all!  
Rickollect the trimblin' spout  
Where the meal come josslin' out —  
Stand and comb yer fingers through  
The fool-truck an hour er two —  
Felt so sort o' warm-like and  
Soothin' to a feller's hand!

Climb, high up above the stream,  
And “coon” out the wobbly beam  
And peek down from out the lof’  
Where the weatherboards was off—  
Gee-mun-*nee*! w’y, it takes grit  
Even jest to think of it!—  
Lookin’ ’way down there below  
On the worter roarin’ so!

Rickollect the flume, and wheel,  
And the worter, slosh and reel,  
And jest ravel out in froth  
Flossier’n satin cloth!  
Rickollect them paddles jest  
Knock the bubbles galley-west,  
And plunge under, and come up,  
Drippin’ like a worter-pup!

And, to see them old things gone  
That I onc’t was bettin’ on,  
In rale pint o’ fact, I feel  
Kindo’ like that worter-wheel,—

Sorto' drippy-like and wet  
Round the eyes — but paddlin' yet,  
And, in mem'ry, loafin' still  
Down around old Kingry's Mill!

*JONEY.*

HAD a hare-lip—Joney had :  
Spiled his looks, and Joney knowed it;  
Fellers tried to bore him, bad—  
But, ef ever he got mad,  
He kep' still and never showed it.  
'Druther have his mouth, all pouted  
And split up, and like it wuz,  
Than the ones 'at laughed about it.—  
Purty is as purty does!

Had to listen ruther clos't  
'Fore you knowed what he wuz givin'  
You; and yet, without no boast  
Joney he wuz jes' the most  
Entertainin' talker livin'!  
Take the Scriptures and run through 'em,  
Might say, like a' auctionier,  
And 'ud argy and review 'em  
'At wuz beautiful to hear!



Hare-lip and inpediment,

Both wuz bad, and both agin him —  
But the old folks where he went,  
'Peared like, knowin' his intent,  
'Scused his mouth for what wuz in him.  
And *the childern* all loved Joney —  
And he loved 'em back, you bet! —  
Put their arms around him — on'y  
None had ever kissed him yet!

In young company, someway,

Boys 'ud grin at one-another  
On the sly; and girls 'ud lay  
Low, with nothin' much to say,  
Er leave Joney with their mother.  
Many and many a time he's fetched 'em  
Candy by the paper-sack,  
And turned right around and ketched 'em  
Makin' mouths behind his back!

S'prised, sometimes, the slurs he took.—

Chap said onc't his mouth looked sorter  
Like a fish's mouth 'ud look

When he'd ben jerked off the hook

And plunked back into the worter.—  
Same durn feller—its su'prisin',

But it's facts—'at stood and cherred  
From the bank that big baptizin'  
'Pike-bridge accident occurred!

Cherred fer Joney while he give

Life to little childern drowndin'!

Which wuz fittenest to live—

Him 'at cherred, er him 'at div'

And saved thirteen lives? . . . They  
found one

Body, three days later, floated

Down the by-o, eight mile' south,  
All so colored-up and bloated—

On'y knowed him by his mouth!

Had a hare-lip—Joney had—

Folks 'at filed apast all knowed it—  
Them 'at ust to smile looked sad,  
But ef HE thought good er bad,

He kep' still and never showed it.  
'Druther have that mouth, all pouted

And split up, and like it wuz,  
Than the ones 'at laughed about it.

Purty is as purty does!

NOTHIN' TO SAY.

NOTHIN' to say, my daughter! Nothin' at all  
to say! —

Gyrls that's in love, I've noticed, ginerly has their  
way!

Yer mother did, afore you, when her folks  
objected to me —

Yit here I am, and here you air; and yer  
mother — where is she?

You look lots like yer mother: Purty much  
same in size;

And about the same complected; and favor about  
the eyes:

Like her, too, about her *livin'* here,—because *she*  
couldn't stay:

It'll 'most seem like you was dead — like her! —  
but I hain't got nothin' to say!

She left you her little Bible — writ yer name  
    acrost the page —  
And left her ear-bobs fer you, ef ever you come  
    of age.  
I've allus kep' 'em and gyarded 'em, but ef yer  
    goin' away —  
Nothin' to say, my daughter! Nothin' at all to say!

You don't rikollect her, I reckon? No; you  
    wasn't a year old then!  
And now yer — how old air you? W'y, child,  
    not "*twenty!*" When?  
And yer nex' birthday's in Aprile? and you want  
    to git married that day?  
. . . . I wisht yer mother was livin'! — but — I  
    hain't got nothin' to say!

Twenty year! and as good a gyrl as parent ever  
    found!  
There's a straw ketched onto yer dress there — I'll  
    bresh it off — turn round.  
(Her mother was jes' twenty when us two run  
    away!)

Nothin' to say, my daughter! Nothin' at all to say!

*LIKE HIS MOTHER USED TO MAKE.*

“UNCLE JAKE’S PLACE,” ST. JO, MO., 1874.

“ I WAS born in Indiany,” says a stranger,  
lank and slim,  
As us fellers in the restarunt was kindo’ guyin’  
him,  
And Uncle Jake was slidin’ him another  
punkin pie  
And a’ extry cup o’ coffee, with a twinkle in  
his eye,—  
“ I was born in Indiany — more’n forty year’  
ago —  
And I hain’t ben back in twenty — and I’m  
workin’ back’ards slow ;  
But I’ve et in ever’ restarunt twixt here and  
Santy Fee,  
And I want to state this coffee tastes like gittin’  
home, to me !

“ Pour us out another, Daddy,” says the feller,  
warmin’ up,  
A-speakin’ ’crost a saucerful, as Uncle tuck his  
cup,—  
“ When I seed yer sign out yander,” he went on,  
to Uncle Jake,—  
“ ‘ Come in and git some coffee like yer mother  
used to make’ —  
I thought of *my* old mother, and the Posey  
county farm,  
And me a little kid agin, a-hangin’ in her arm,  
As she set the pot a-bilin’, broke the eggs and  
poured ’em in ” —  
And the feller kindo’ halted, with a trimble in  
his chin :

And Uncle Jake he fetched the feller’s coffee  
back, and stood  
As solemn, fer a minute, as a’ undertaker  
would ;  
Then he sorto’ turned and tiptoed to’rds the  
kitchen door—and next,  
Here comes his old wife out with him, a-rubbin’  
of her specs —

And she rushes fer the stranger, and she  
hollers out, "It's him! —  
Thank God we've met him comin'!—Don't you  
know yer mother, Jim?"  
And the feller, as he grabbed her, says,—  
"You bet I hain't forgot—  
But," wipin' of his eyes, says he, "yer coffee's  
mighty hot!"



*THE TRAIN-MISSER.*

AT UNION DEPOT.

'L L WHERE in the world my eyes has bin —  
Ef I haint missed that train agin!  
Chuff! and whistle! and toot! and ring!  
But blast and blister the dasted train! —  
How it does it I can't explain!  
Git here thirty-five minutes before  
The dern thing's due! — and, drat the thing!  
It'll manage to git past — shore!

The more I travel around, the more  
I got no sense! — To stand right here  
And let it beat me! 'Ll ding my melts!  
I got no gumption, ner nothin' else!  
Ticket Agent's a dad-burned bore! —  
Sell you a ticket's all they keer! —

Ticket Agents ort to all be  
Prosecuted—and that's jes' what!—  
How'd I know which train's fer me?  
And how'd I know which train was not?—  
Goern and comin' and gone astray,  
And backin' and switchin' ever'-which-way!

Ef I could jes' sneak round behind  
Myse'f, where I could git full swing,—  
I'd lift my coat, and kick, by jing!  
Till I jes' got jerked up and fined!—  
Fer here I stood, as a dern fool's apt  
To, and let that train jes' chuff and choo  
Right apast me—and mouth jes' gapped  
Like a blamed old sandwitch warped-in two!

*GRANNY.*

GRANNY'S come to our house,  
And ho! my lawzy-daisy!  
All the childern round the place  
Is ist a-runin' crazy!  
Fetched a cake fer little Jake,  
And fetched a pie fer Nanny,  
And fetched a pear fer all the pack  
That runs to kiss ther Granny!

Lucy Ellen's in her lap,  
And Wade, and Silas Walker,  
Both's a-ridin' on her foot,  
And 'Pollos on the rocker;  
And Marthy's twins, from Aunt Marin's,  
And little orphant Anny,  
All's a-eatin' gingerbread  
And giggle-un at Granny!

Tells us all the fairy tales  
Ever thought er wondered —  
And 'bundance o' other stories —  
Bet she knows a hunderd! —  
Bob's the one fer "Whittington,"  
And "Golden Locks" for Fanny!  
Hear 'em laugh and clap ther hands,  
Listenin' at Granny!

"Jack the Giant-Killer"'s good —  
And "Bean-stalk"'s another —  
So's the one of Cinderell'  
And her old godmother; —  
That un's best of all the rest —  
Bestest one of any, —  
Where the mices scampers home  
Like we runs to Granny!

Granny's come to our house,  
Ho! my lawzy-daisy!  
All the childern round the place  
Is ist a-runnin' crazy!

Fetch'd a cake fer little Jake,  
And fetch'd a pie fer Nanny,  
And fetch'd a pear fer all the pack  
That runs to kiss ther Granny!

*OLD OCTOBER.*

OLD OCTOBER'S purt' nigh gone,  
And the frosts is comin' on  
Little heavier every day—  
Like our hearts is thataway!  
Leaves is changin' overhead  
Back from green, to gray and red,  
Brown, and yellor, with their stems  
Loosenin' on the oaks and e'ms;  
And the balance of the trees  
Gittin' balder every breeze—  
Like the heads we're scratchin' on!  
Old October's purt' nigh gone.

I love Old October so,  
I can't bear to see her go—  
Seems to me like losin' some  
Old-home relative, er chum—  
'Pears like sorto' settin' by  
Some old friend 'at sigh by sigh

Was a-passin' out o' sight  
Into everlastin' night!  
Hickernuts a feller hears  
Rattlin' down is more like tears  
Drappin' on the leaves below—  
I love Old October so!

Can't tell what it is about  
Old October knocks me out!—  
I sleep well enough at night—  
And the blamedest appetite  
Ever mortal man possessed,—  
Last thing et, it tastes the best!—  
Warnuts, butternuts, pawpaws,  
Ples and limbers up my jaws  
Fer raal service, sich as new  
Pork, spareribs, and sausage, too.—  
Yit, fer all, they's somepin' 'bout  
Old October knocks me out!

*JIM.*

HE was jes' a plain, ever'-day, all-round kind of  
a jour.,

Consumpted-lookin' — but la!

The jokeiest, wittiest, story-tellin', song-singin',  
laughin'est, jolliest

Feller you ever saw!

Worked at jes' coarse work, but you kin bet he  
was fine enough in his talk,

And his feelin's too!

Lordy! ef he was on'y back on his bench agin  
to-day, a-carryin' on

Like he ust to do!

Any shop-mate'll tell you there never was, on top  
o' dirt,

A better feller'n Jim!

You want a favor, and couldn't git it anywheres  
else —

You could git it o' him!



Most free-heartedest man thataway in the world, I  
guess!

Give up ever' nickel he's worth—  
And, ef you'd a-wanted it, and named it to him,  
and it was his,  
He'd a-give you the earth!

Allus a-reachin' out, Jim was, and a he'pin' some  
Pore feller onto his feet—  
He'd a-never a-keered how hungry he was hisse'f,  
So's *the feller* got somepin' to eat!  
Didn't make no difference at all to him how *he*  
was dressed,  
He ust to say to me,—  
“You togg out a tramp purty comfortable in  
winter time, a-huntin' a job,  
And he'll git along!” says he.

Jim didn't have, ner never could git ahead so  
overly much  
O' this world's goods at a time.—  
'Fore now I've saw him, more'n onc't, lend a  
dollar, and haf' to, more'n likely,  
Turn round and borry a dime!

Mebby laugh and joke about it hisse'f fer a  
while — then jerk his coat,  
And kindo' square his chin,  
Tie on his apern, and squat hisse'f on his old  
shoe-bench,  
And go to peggin' agin!

Patientest feller, too, I reckon', at ever jes'  
naturely  
Coughed hisse'f to death!  
Long enough after his voice was lost he'd laugh  
in a whisper and say  
He could git ever'thing but his breath —  
“You fellers,” he'd sorto' twinkle his eyes and say,  
“Is a-pilin onto me  
A mighty big debt for that-air little weak-chested  
ghost o'mine to pack  
Through all Eternity!”

Now there was a man 'at jes' 'peared like, to me,  
'At ortn't *a-never* a-died!  
“But death hain't a-showin' no favors,” the old  
boss said,  
“On'y to Jim!” and cried:

And Wigger, who puts up the best sewed-work  
in the shop,  
Er the whole blame neighborhood,  
He says, "When God made Jim, I bet you He  
didn't do anything else that day  
But jes' set around and feel good!"

*A TALE OF THE AIRLY DAYS.*

OH! TELL ME a tale of the airy days—  
Of the times as they ust to be;  
“Piller Of Fire,” and “Shakspeare’s Plays,”  
Is a ’most too deep fer me!  
I want plain facts, and I want plain words,  
Of the good old-fashioned ways,  
When speech run free as the songs of birds—  
’Way back in the airy days.

Tell me a tale of the timber-lands,  
And the old-time pioneers—  
Somepin’ a pore man understands  
With his feelins’, well as ears:  
Tell of the old log house,—about  
The loft, and the puncheon floor—  
The old fire-place, with the crane swung out,  
And the latch-string through the door.

Tell of the things jest like they wuz —

They don't need no excuse!

Don't tetch'em up like the poets does,

Till they're all too fine fer use!

Say they wuz 'leven in the family —

Two beds and the chist below,

And the trundle-beds 'at each helt three;

And the clock and the old bureau.

Then blow the horn at the old back door

Till the echoes all halloo,

And the childern gethers home onc't more,

Jest as they ust to do;

Blow fer Pap till he hears and comes,

With Toms and Elias, too,

A-marchin' home, with the fife and drums,

And the old Red White and Blue!

Blow and blow—till the sound draps low

As the moan of the whippwill,

And wake up Mother, and Ruth, and Jo,

All sleepin' at Bethel Hill;

Blow and call till the faces all  
Shine out in the back-log's blaze,  
And the shadders dance on the old hewed wall,  
As they did in the airly days.

*TO ROBERT BURNS.*

SWEET SINGER, that I loe the maist  
O' ony, sin' wi' eager haste  
I smackit bairn-lips ower the taste  
O' hinnied sang,  
I hail thee, though a blessed ghaist  
In Heaven lang!

For, weel I ken, nae cantie phrase,  
Nor courtly airs, nor lairdly ways,  
Could gar me freer blame, or praise,  
Or proffer hand,  
Where "Rantin' Robbie" and his lays  
Thegither stand.

And sae these hamely lines I send,  
Wi' jinglin' words at ilka end,

In echo of the sangs that wend  
Frae thee to me  
Like simmer-brooks, wi' mony a bend  
O' wimplin' glee.

In fancy, as wi' dewy een,  
I part the clouds aboon the scene  
Where thou wast born, and peer atween,  
I see nae spot  
In a' the Hielands half sae green  
And unforgot!

I see nae storied castle-hall,  
Wi' banners flauntin' ower the wall,  
And serf and page in ready call,  
Sae grand to me  
As ane puir cotter's hut, wi' all  
Its poverty.

There where the simple daisy grew  
Sae bonnie sweet, and modest, too,



Thy liltin' filled its wee head fu'  
O' sic a grace,  
It aye is weepin' tears o' dew  
Wi' droopit face.

Frae where the heather bluebells fling  
Their sangs o' fragrance to the Spring,  
To where the lavrock soars to sing,  
Still lives thy strain,  
For a' the birds are twittering  
Sangs like thine ain.

And aye, by light o' sun or moon,  
By banks o' Ayr, or Bonnie Doon,  
The waters lilt nae tender tune  
But sweeter seems  
Because they poured their limpid rune  
Through a' thy dreams.

Wi' brimmin' lip, and laughin' ee,  
Thou shookest even Grief wi' glee,

Yet had nae niggart sympathy  
Where Sorrow bowed,  
But gavest a' thy tears as free  
As a' thy gowd.

And sae it is we loe thy name  
To see bleeze up wi' sic a flame,  
That a' pretentious stars o' fame  
Maun blink asklent,  
To see how simple worth may shame  
Their brightest glent.

*A NEW YEAR'S TIME AT WILLARDS'S.*

I.

THE HIRED MAN TALKS.

THERE'S old man Willards; an' his wife;  
An' Marg'et—S'repty's sister;—an'  
There's me—an' I'm the hired man,  
An' Tomps McClure, you bet yer life!

Well, now, old Willards haint so bad,  
Considerin' the chance he's had,  
Of course, he's rich, an' sleeps an' eats  
Whenever he's a mind to: Takes  
An' leans back in the Amen-seats,  
An' thanks the Lord fer all he makes—  
That's purty much all folks has got  
Ag'inst the old man, like as not!  
But there's his woman—jes' the turn  
Of them-air two wild girls o' hern—  
Marg'et an' S'repty—allus in  
Fer any cuttin'-up concern—  
Church festibals, an' foolishin'

Round Christmas trees, an' New Year's sprees —  
 Set up to watch the Old Year go  
 An' New Year come — sich things as these ;  
 An' turkey dinners, don't you know!  
 S'repty's younger, an' more gay,  
 An' purtier, an' finer dressed  
 Than Marg'et is — but Lawsy-day!  
 She haint the independentest! —  
 "Take care!" old Willards used to say,  
 "Take care! Let Marg'et have her way,  
 An' S'repty, you go off an' play  
 On your melodeum!" — But best  
 Of all comes Toms! An' I'll be bound,  
 Ef he haint jes' the beatin'est  
 Young chap in all the country round!  
 Ef you knowed Toms you'd like him,  
 shore!  
 They haint no man on top o' ground  
 Walks into my affections more! —  
 An' all the settlement'll say  
 That Toms was liked jes' thataway  
 By ever'body, till he tuck  
 A shine to S'repty Willards. — Then  
 You'd orto' see the old man "buck,"

An' h'ist hisse'f, an' paw the dirt,  
     An' hint that common workin'-men  
 That didn't want their feelin's hurt,  
     Had better hunt fer "comp'ny" where  
     The folks was pore an' didn't care! —  
 The pine-blank facts is,—the old man,  
     Last Christmas was a year ago,  
     Found out some presents Toms had got  
     Fer S'repty, an' hit made him hot —  
 Set down an' tuck his pen in hand  
     An' writ to Toms an' told him so  
     On legal cap, in white an' black,  
 An' give him jes' to understand  
 "No Christmas-gifts o' 'lilly-white'  
     An' bear's-ile could fix matters right,"  
     An' wropped 'em up an' sent 'em back!  
 Well, S'repty cried and snuffled round  
     Consid'able. But Marg'et she  
 Toed out another sock, an' wound  
     Her knittin' up an' drawed the tea,  
     An' then set on the supper things,  
 An' went up in the loft an' dressed —  
 An' through it all you'd never guessed  
     What she was up to! An' she brings

Her best hat with her an' her shawl,  
An' gloves, an' redicule, an' all,  
An' injirubbers, an' comes down  
An' tells 'em she's a-goin' to town  
To he'p the Christmas goin's-on  
Her church got up. An' go she does —  
The best hosswoman ever was!  
“An' what'll we do while you're gone?”  
The old man says, a-tryin' to be  
Agreeable. “Oh! *you?*” says she,—  
“*You* kin jaw S'repty, like you did,  
An' slander Toms!” An' off she rid!

Now, this is all I'm goin' to tell  
Of this here story — that is, I  
Have done my very level best  
As fer as this, an' here I “dwell,”  
As auctioneers says, winkin' sly:  
Hits old man Willards tells the rest.

## II.

### THE OLD MAN TALKS.

Adzackly jes' one year ago,  
This New Year's day, Toms comes to me —

In my own house, an' while the folks  
Was gittin' dinner,—an' he pokes  
His nose right in, an' says, says he :  
“I got yer note —an' read it *slow* !  
You don't like *me*, ner I don't *you*,”  
He says,—“ we 're even there, you know !  
But you've said, funder, that no gal  
Of yourn kin marry me, er shall,  
An' I'd best shet off comin', too !”  
An' then he says,—“ Well them's YOUR views,  
But, havin' talked with S'repty, we  
Have both agreed to disagree  
With your peculiar notions some,  
An' that's the reason I refuse  
To quit a-comin' here, but come —  
Not fer to threat, ner raise no skeer,  
An' spile yer turkey-dinner here,—  
But, jes' fer S'repty's sake, to sheer  
Yer New Year's. Shall I take a cheer ?”

Well, blame-don ! ef I ever see  
Sich impidence ! I couldn't say  
Not nary word ! But mother she  
Sot out a cheer fer Tomps, an' they

Shuck hands an' turned their back on me.  
 Then I riz — mad as mad could be —  
     But Marg'et says,—"Now, Pap! you set  
     Right where you're settin'! Don't you fret!  
 An' Tomps, you warm yer feet!" says she,  
     "An' throw yer mitts an' comfort 'on  
     The bed there! Where is S'repty gone? —  
     The cabbage is a-scortchin'! Ma,  
     Stop cryin' there an' stir the slaw!"  
 Well! — what was *Mother cryin'* fer? —  
     I half riz up — but Marg'et's chin  
     Hit squared — an' I set down agin —  
 I allus *was* afeared o' her —  
 I was, by jucks! So there I set,  
 Betwixt a sinkin'-chill an' sweat,  
 An' scuffled with my wrath, an' shet  
 My teeth to mighty tight, you bet!  
     An' yit, fer all that I could do,  
 I eched to jes' git up an' whet  
     The carvin'-knife a rasp er two  
     On Tomps's ribs — an' so would you! —  
 Fer he had riz an' faced around,  
     An' stood there, smilin', as they brung  
 The turkey in, all stuffed an' browned —



Too sweet fer nose er tooth er tongue!  
 With sniffs o' sage, an' p'raps a dash  
 Of old burnt brandy, steamin' hot  
 Mixed kind o' in with apple-mash,  
 An' mince-meat, an' the Lord knows what!  
 Nobody was a-talkin' then  
 To 'filliate my awk'ardness —  
 No noise o' any kind, but jes'  
 The rattle o' the dishes when  
 They'd fetch 'em in an' set 'em down,  
 An' fix an' change 'em round an' round,  
 Like women does — Till mother says, —  
 "Vittels is ready; Abner, call  
 Down S'repty — she's up stairs, I guess." —  
 And Marg'et *she* says, "Ef you bawl  
 Like that, she'll not come down at all!  
 Besides, we needn't wait till she  
 Gits down! Here, Toms, set down by me,  
 An' Pap, say grace!" Well, there I was,  
 What *could* I do! I drapped my head  
 Behind my fists an' groaned, an' said:—  
 "Indulgent Parent! in Thy cause  
 We bow the head an' bend the knee,

An' break the bread, an' pour the wine,  
    Feelin'—(The stair-door suddently  
    Went bang! an' S'repty flounced by me)—  
"Feelin'," I says, "this feast is Thine—  
    This New Year's feast"—An' rap-rap-rap!  
    Went Marg'et's case-knife on her plate—  
    An' next, I heerd a sasser drap,—  
    Then I looked up, an' strange to state,  
There S'repty set in Tomps's lap—  
    An' huggin' him, as shore as fate!—  
An' mother kissin' him k-slap!  
An' Marg'et—she chips in to drap  
    The ruther peert remark to me:—  
    "That 'grace' o' yourn," she says, "wont  
        'gee'—  
    This haint no '*New Year's feast*,'" says she,—  
    "*This is a' Infair Dinner, Pap!*"

An' so it was!—Ben married fer  
    Purt'nigh a week!—'Twas Marg'et planned  
    The whole thing fer 'em, through an'  
        through.  
    I'm reconciled; an', understand,

I take things jes' as they occur,—  
Ef *Marg'et* liked Tomps, Tomps 'ud do!  
But I-says-I, a-holt his hand,—  
“I'm glad you didn't marry HER—  
'Cause Marg'et's *my* *guardeen*—Yes, *sir*!—  
An' S'repty's good enough fer you!”

*THE TOWN KARNTEEL.*

THE town Karnteel!—It's who'll reveal  
Its praises jushtifiable?  
For who can sing av anything  
So lovely and reliable?  
Whin Summer, Spring, or Winter lies  
From Malin's Head to Tipperary,  
There's no such town for interprise  
Bechuxt Youghal and Londonderry!\*

There's not its likes in Ireland—  
For twic't the week, be-gorries!  
They're playing jigs upon the band—  
And joomping there in sacks—and —and —  
And racing, wid wheel-borries!

Karnteel—its there, like any fair,  
The purty gurrls is plinty, sure!—  
And, man-alive! at forty-five  
The legs av me air twinty, sure!

I lave me cares, and hoein', too,  
Behint me, as is sinsible,  
And its Karnteel I'm goin' to,  
To cilebrate in principal!

For there's the town av all the land!  
And twic't the week, be-gorries!  
They're playing jigs upon the band,  
And joomping there in sacks — and — and —  
And racing, wid wheel-borries!

And whilst I feel for ould Karnteel  
That I've no phrases glorious,  
It stands above the need av love  
That boasts in voice uproarious! —  
Lave that for Cork, and Dublin, too,  
And Armagh and Killarney, thin, —  
And Karnteel won't be troublin' you  
Wid any jilous blarney, thin!

For there's the town av all the land,  
Where twic't the week, be-gorries!  
They're playing jigs upon the band —  
And joomping there in sacks — and — and —  
And racing, wid wheel-borries!

*REGARDIN' TERRY HUT.*

SINCE I tuck holt o' Gibbses Churn  
And ben a-handlin' the concern,  
I've traveled round the grand ole State  
Of Indiany lots, of late !  
I've canvassed Crawferdsville and sweat  
Around the town of Lafayette;  
I've saw a many a County-seat  
I ust to think was hard to beat :  
At constant dreelage and expense  
I've worked Greencastle and Vincennes —  
Dropped out o' Putnam into Clay,  
Owen, and on down thataway  
Plum' into Knox, on the back-track  
Fer home agin — and glad I'm back ! —  
I've saw these towns, as I say — but  
They's none 'at beats ole Terry Hut !

Its more'n likely you'll insist  
I claim this 'cause I'm predjudist,

Bein' born'd here in ole Vygo  
In sight o' Terry Hut; — but no,  
Yer clean dead wrong! — and I maintain  
They's nary drap in ary vein  
O' mine but what's as free as air  
To jest take issue with you there! —  
'Cause, boy and man, fer forty year,  
I've argied *against* livin' here,  
And jawed around and traded lies  
About our lack o' enterprise;  
And tuck and turned in and agreed  
All other towns was in the lead,  
When — drat my melts! — they couldn't cut  
No shine a-tall with Terry Hut!

Take, even, statesmanship and wit,  
And ginerel git-up-and-git, —  
Ole Terry Hut is sound clean through! —  
Turn ole Dick Thompson loose, er Dan  
Vorehees — and where's they any man  
Kin even hold a candle to  
Their eloquence? And where's as clean  
A fi-nan-seer as Rile' McKeen —  
Er puorer, in his daily walk,

In railroad er in racein' stock!  
And there's 'Gene Debs — a man 'at stands  
And jest holds out in his two hands  
As warm a heart as ever beat  
Betwixt here and the Jedgement Seat!—  
All these is reasons why I put  
Sich bulk o' faith in Terry Hut.

So I've come back, with eyes 'at sees  
My faults, at last,—to make my peace  
With this old place, and truthful swear—  
Like Ginerel Tom Nelson does,—  
“They haint no city anywhere  
On God's green earth lays over us!”  
Our city govament is *grand* —  
“Ner is they better farmin'-land  
Sun-kissed” —as Tom goes on and says—  
“Er dower'd with sich advantages!”  
And I've come back, with welcome tread,  
From journeyin's vain, as I have said,  
To settle down in ca'm content,  
And cuss the towns where I have went,  
And brag on ourn and boast and strut  
Around the streets o' Terry Hut!



*LEEDLE DUTCH BABY.*

**L** EEDLE Dutch baby haff come ter town!  
Jabber und jump till der day gone down—  
Jabber und splutter, und split hees jaws—  
Vot a Dutch baby dees Launsmon vas!  
I dink dose mout' vas leedle too vide  
Ober he laugh fon dot also-side!  
Haff got blenty off deemple und vrown—  
Hey! leedle Dutchman, come ter town!

Leedle Dutch baby, I dink me proud  
Ober your fader can schquall dot loud  
Ven he vas leedle Dutch baby like you,  
Und yoost don't gare like he always do!—  
Guess ven dey vean him on beer, you bet  
Dot's der because dot he aind veaned yet!—  
Vot you said off he drink you down?  
Hey! leedle Dutchman, come ter town!

Leedle Dutch baby, yoost schquall away—  
Schquall fon preakfast till gisterday!  
Better you all time cry und shout  
Dan shmile me vonce fon der coffin out!  
Vot I gare off you keek my nose  
Downside-up mit your heels unt toes—  
Downside, oder der upside-down.—  
Hey! leedle Dutchman, come ter town!

DOWN ON WRIGGLE CRICK.

Best Time to Kill a Hog 's when He 's Fat.—*Old Saw.*

MOSTLY, folks is law abidin',  
Down on Wriggle Crick,—  
Seein' they's no 'Squire residin'  
In our bailywick;  
No grand-juries — no suppeenies,  
Ner no vested rights to pick  
Out yer man, jerk up and jail ef  
He's outragin' Wriggle Crick!

Wriggle Crick haint got no lawin',  
Ner no suits to beat;  
Ner no court-house gee-and-hawin'  
Like a county-seat;  
Haint no waitin' round fer verdicks,  
Ner non-gittin' witness-fees:  
Ner no thieves 'at gits "new hearin's,"  
By some lawyer slick as grease!

Wriggle Cricks's leadin' spirit  
Is old Johnts Culwell,—  
Keeps postoffice, and right near it  
Owns what's called "The Grand Hotel"—  
(Warehouse now) —buys wheat and ships it;  
Gits out ties, and trades in stock,  
And knows all the high-toned drummers  
'Twixt South Bend and Mishawauk.

Last year comes along a feller —  
Sharper 'an a lance,—  
Stovepipe-hat, and silk umbreller,  
And a boughten all-wool pants,—  
Tinkerin' of clocks and watches;  
Says a trial's all he wants —  
And rents out the tavern-office  
Next to uncle Johnts.

Well.—He tacked up his k'dentials,  
And got down to biz.—  
Captured Johnts by cuttin' stencils  
Fer them old wheat-sacks o' his.—

Fixed his clock, in the postoffice—  
Painted fer him, clean and slick,  
'Crost his safe in gold-leaf letters,  
“J. Cullwells's, Wriggle Crick.”

Any kind o' job you keered to  
Resk him with, and bring,  
He'd fix fer you—jest appeared to  
Turn his hand to anything!—  
Rings, er earbobs, er umbrellers—  
Glue a cheer, er chany doll,—  
W'y, of all the beatin' fellers  
He jest beat 'em all!

Made his friends, but wouldn't stop there,—  
One mistake he learnt,  
That was, sleepin' in his shop there.—  
And one Sunday night it burnt!  
Come in one o' jest a-sweepin'  
All the whole town high and dry—  
And that feller, when they waked him,  
Suffocatin', mighty nigh!

Johnts he drug him from the buildin',  
Helpless—'peared to be,—  
And the women and the childern  
Drenchin' him with sympathy!  
But I noticed Johnts helt on him  
With a' extry lovin' grip,  
And the men-folks gethered round him  
In most warmest pardership!

That's the whole mess, grease and dopin'!  
Johnts's safe was saved,—  
But the lock was found sprung open,  
And the inside caved.  
Was no trial—ner no jury—  
Ner no jedge ner court-house-click,—  
Circumstances alters cases  
Down on Wriggle Crick!

*WHEN DE FOLKS IS GONE.*

WHAT dat scratchin' at de kitchin' do'?  
Done heah'n dat foh an hour er mo'!  
Tell you, Mr. Niggah, das sho's yo' bo'n,  
Hit's might lonesome waitin' when de folks is  
gone!

Blame my trap! how de wind do blow!  
An' dis is das' de night foh de witches, sho'!  
Dey's trouble gon' to waste when de ole slut  
whine,  
An' you heah de cat a-spittin' when de moon don't  
shine!

Chune my fiddle, an' de bridge go "*bang!*"  
An' I lef 'er right back whah she allus hang,  
An' de tribble snap short an' de apern split  
When dey no mortal man wah a-techin' hit!

Dah! Now, what! How de ole j'ice cracks!  
'Spec' dis house, ef hit tell plain fac's,  
'Ud talk about de ha'nts wid dey long tails on  
What das'n't on'y come when de folks is gone!

What I tuk an' done ef a sho'-nuff' ghos'  
Pop right up by de ole bed-pos'?  
What dat shinin' fru de front do' crack? . . . .  
God bress de Lo'd! hit's de folks got back!



*THE LITTLE TOWN O' TAILHOLT.*

YOU kin boast about yer cities, and their stiddy  
growth and size,  
And brag about yer county-seats, and business  
enterprise,  
And railroads, and factories, and all sich foolery—  
But the little Town o' Tailholt is big enough fer  
me!

You can harp about yer churches, with their  
steeples in the clouds,  
And gas about yer graded streets, and blow about  
yer crowds;  
You kin talk about yer theaters, and all you've  
got to see —  
But the little Town o' Tailholt is show enough fer  
me!

They haint no style in our town — hit's little-like  
and small —  
They haint no *churches*, nuther,—jes' the meetin'-  
house is all;

2

They's no sidewalks, to speak of — but the  
highway's allus free,  
And the little Town o' Tailholt is wide enough fer  
me!

Some finds its discommodin'-like, I'm willin' to  
admit,  
To hev but one postoffice, and a womern keepin'  
hit,  
And the drugstore, and shoeshop, and grocery, all  
three —  
But the little Town o' Tailholt is handy 'nough  
fer me!

You kin smile, and turn yer nose up, and joke  
and hev yer fun,  
And laugh and holler "Tail-holts is better holts 'n  
none!"  
Ef the city suits you better, w'y, hits where  
you'd orto' be,  
But the little Town o' Tailholt 's good enough fer  
me!











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